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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: BEMBA,S READOUT OF KABILA MEETING REINFORCES
IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED DIALOGUE

REF: A. KINSHASA 1439

- [1](#)B. KINSHASA 1470
- [1](#)C. KINSHASA 1427
- [1](#)D. KINSHASA 1448

Classified By: PolCouns DBrown, reason 1.4 b,d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. DR Congo VP Bemba gave a readout of his meeting last week with President Kabila during a September 18 discussion with the Ambassador. His version focused on their exchanges of views, including charges and counter-charges, on the August 20-22 armed confrontations between their troops. Bemba,s readout reinforced the impression of poor relations between the two candidates and their camps. The Ambassador encouraged Bemba to continue the dialogue with the aim of the two candidates reaching an accord on the conduct of elections and the post-electoral period. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Ambassador's first meeting with DR Congo Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba since the August 20-22 firefight in Kinshasa took place on September 18 and featured Bemba,s readout of his meeting last week with President Kabila (ref A) and frequent interruptions with news of the fire at offices of Bemba,s MLC party and television stations (ref B). The Ambassador emphasized the importance of continued dialogue between the two and of a Kabila-Bemba accord on the conduct of the electoral and post-electoral processes. He and Bemba also discussed issues raised by the election of a number of senior officials to the new National Assembly. Political Counselor sat in as nottaker.

[1](#)3. (C) The September 1 Kabila-Bemba meeting followed extended negotiations between the two camps and active mediation by MONUC and the CIAT ambassadors. Bemba gave credit to both MONUC and Kabila for facilitating the process. Bemba confirmed a one-on-one meeting with Kabila following official proceedings of the Espace Presidential and Higher Defense Council. Discussion focused on issues involving the August 20-22 shootout.

[1](#)4. (C) In Bemba,s retelling, he led off by asking Kabila, "Why did you try to kill me?" Kabila denied that he had. He explained that he had acted when informed by the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) that Bemba,s troops had surrounded its building on August 20, and on August 21 when he heard that Bemba had arrested two of his men. Bemba said he denied any action directed against the CEI, protested against the attack on his residence, and demanded to know why Kabila hadn't simply called him. He said Kabila failed to explain his actions.

[1](#)5. (C) Their discussion then turned to media issues. According to Bemba, Kabila accused Bemba of calling him a

foreigner. Bemba denied this, but did not deny that employees of his stations may have, claiming "I do not control the broadcast." He said he told Kabila that taking criticism was part of being a politician, and cited government broadcasts he said had insulted him and Vice President Ruberwa.

¶6. (C) Finally, Bemba said he appealed to Kabila, "We have to stop this kind of thing." He said Kabila told him Kabila was worried that if he lost the election he would end up in exile or prison. "He was truly afraid," Bemba said, "I could feel it." Bemba characterized this as based on false information fed to Kabila by the same advisers who sent in the tanks and accused Bemba of arresting Kabila's men. Bemba said he told Kabila that he had "traumatized everyone." They shook hands, and said good-bye.

¶7. (C) In response, the Ambassador emphasized the importance of continued dialogue and of a Kabila-Bemba accord on the conduct of the electoral and post-electoral processes. He highlighted the importance of the Mixed Commission's ongoing work and agreement to reduce forces in Kinshasa as the basis for such an accord. He stressed that there is an excessively big military presence on the streets of the capital, and cited the CIAT communique of September 11 as an example of actions that should be taken (ref C). The Ambassador said an accord between the two candidates should include an understanding of the eventual fate of the loser.

¶8. (C) Bemba agreed, and said he did not exclude the possibility of including the PPRD in his cabinet if he won the election. The Ambassador expressed hope that Bemba and Kabila would be able to discuss this further.

¶9. (C) Bemba also floated the idea of postponing the scheduled September 22 opening session of the new National

Assembly. He said the many ministers who had been elected to the Assembly would soon have to resign as a result, causing problems with continuity (ref D) and unbudgeted expenses. The Ambassador said the Assembly had important work to do in preparing for the new government, and suggested creative thinking to deal with the issue of ministerial vacancies. He stressed the importance of holding to the September 22 date to avoid creating an impression of another blockage to the democratic process.

¶10. (C) Comment. Regardless of how self-serving Bemba's recounting of the meeting with Kabila may have been, it serves to emphasize the poor state of communication between the two and within their respective camps. A Kabila-Bemba accord would be an important step forward, but we will also need to encourage ongoing, regular dialogue between their associates aimed at building the trust needed to ensure a smooth transition to post-electoral politics. End comment.
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